Depth Psychological Perspective as Physical Therapy

Physical therapy as a treatment modality in the outpatient setting has been proven very effective for a wide variety of musculoskeletal diagnoses. These include anything from acute musculoskeletal injury and post-operative impairments to more chronic ailments. However, as a physical therapist with experience in this setting for more than eleven years, I have noticed that patients with the same diagnoses rarely present similarly and are almost never “textbook patients,” and that patients’ responses to treatment of similar diagnoses vary tremendously. I have also become aware of how patients’ personalities change as they start to feel better and experience less pain in their physical bodies. These three observations have been a steady interest of mine, and have led me to question not only why this occurs, but, also how it is possible. I have started to question the term psychosomatic symptoms and its context in the physical therapy world. I became very interested in the emotional, spiritual and psychological health of my patients in addition to their physical healing. Over time, dismissing these aspects of the individual while I was treating them for their physical pain and dysfunction became increasingly difficult for me. In this panel discussion, I hope to bring about awareness within the physical therapy community regarding the possible advantages of viewing our patients from a broader perspective – a perspective that includes psychological and emotional wellbeing in the midst of their physical injuries, and addressing the nonphysical imbalances and dysfunctions as we are treating the physical. I would also like to address the importance of providing this adjunctive healing element within the physical therapy clinic instead of referring out to yet another health care professional. Lastly, I will offer suggestions and ideas about how to initiate bridging this gap between body and mind, which is so apparent today in mainstream physical therapy’s approach to helping our patients heal.

Biography: Danél Lombard is a physical therapist with 12 years of experience. She began her undergraduate education at the University of Delaware and continued her graduate work at Thomas Jefferson University in Philadelphia, where she received her Masters in Physical Therapy in 2002. Other certifications include her 200 hour yoga teacher training at Empowered Yoga in Wilmington, DE (2008), Holistic Health Counseling at the Institute for Integrative Nutrition in NYC (2008), as well as Advance Energy Healing at Inner Focus in Las Vegas.
Danél is currently a PhD candidate at Pacifica Graduate Institute, studying Depth Psychology with an emphasis in somatics.